

More House School

Moons Hill, Frensham, Farnham, Surrey GU10 3AP

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

More House School is an independent residential special school for day and residential pupils, boys aged eight to 19, who have literacy needs, developmental language disorders, and associated social communication needs.

The school has a Catholic ethos. It is situated in extensive grounds in a rural setting. Almost half the pupils have an education, health and care plan funded by their local authority. The residential provision is split between the lower school in the main school building and the upper school in a separate accommodation block.

Inspection dates: 29 to 31 January 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 5 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Boarders live in a highly supportive community which enriches their experiences and positively influences their development. They benefit from committed staff who are focused on the individual needs of boarders and on providing the levels of assistance needed for them to succeed and achieve to the best of their ability. Boarders make excellent progress.

A strong therapeutic approach is integrated into all aspects of pupils' school experience, including boarding. Pupils receive targeted support to cope with their learning difficulties and associated emotional and behavioural difficulties. They develop self-confidence and a belief in their own abilities.

The positive experiences of boarders are directly influenced by the trusting relationships that they form with the staff, who are dedicated to improving boarders' well-being and helping them to build a happy and successful life in the future. Boarders know they can approach the staff at any time if they have any concerns and staff will respond and help them.

Boarders acknowledge the benefit of the help they receive from the staff. One boarder commented, 'It's relaxed, people are there to help you when you need it.' Another stated that boarding is 'very individualistic; staff treat us as individuals'. They appreciate the excellent resources on-site, the wide range of activities and time to spend with their friends.

Boarders are influential in decision-making about residential issues. The staff value their views. Various forums, such as the Boarding Council, Pupil Voice and Food Council, provide opportunities for boarders to make suggestions for improving their experiences. Boarders of all ages are active, articulate contributors and the staff welcome their input.

Developing the boarders' independence skills is fundamental to the ethos of boarding. The staff have a continuous focus on preparing boarders for their futures, but not just helping them develop practical skills. The staff know the importance of developing their emotional, social communication and interaction skills and self-confidence so they can cope in the adult world and maximise their life chances.

Parents are positive about their sons' boarding experiences. One parent commented that the staff 'are always ready to listen to the boys' concerns; they look at ways to support the boys' social interactions and encourage the boys' independence whilst ensuring their safety'. Another parent acknowledged the contribution the staff have made in helping the boarder grow 'into a confident and very calm, contented young man'.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Safeguarding pupils is embedded in all aspects of school life. An extremely strong safeguarding ethos is inherent in all the staff's practice, ensuring that the boarders' safety and well-being are paramount. The staff know the boarders very well. They recognise and understand the boarders' specific vulnerabilities and address these on an individual basis, in addition to a whole-school approach to current safeguarding issues. The staff continuously strive to extend pupils' awareness and understanding of keeping themselves safe in the wider community, using an effective 'drip-feed' approach. E-safety and using social media appropriately have a high priority.

Led by a skilled and experienced designated safeguarding lead, the team of safeguarding officers is proactive and responds effectively to all concerns raised. Effective systems are in place for the staff to raise concerns about pupils. Appropriate referrals are made to external safeguarding agencies when necessary. A governor with specific responsibility for overseeing safeguarding practice within the school provides an additional level of oversight and scrutiny to ensure that safeguarding practices are effective.

The staff are well trained, confident and alert in their safeguarding role. They have up-to-date knowledge and understanding of current issues that can present a risk to boarders. Successful partnership working between the school staff, families and external safeguarding agencies promotes the welfare of pupils.

Extremely positive relationships between the staff and the boarders are the foundation of successful behaviour strategies. Structure, routines and clear boundaries help boarders develop a sense of safety, protection and trust. Behaviour is excellent and there has been no use of physical intervention in boarding since the last inspection.

Risk management is highly effective. Individual risk assessments, with thoughtful and detailed protective strategies, guide staff in keeping the boarders safe when it has been identified that a boarder requires additional protective measures. Exemplary practice in reviewing risk assessments is evident. However, the precise nature of behaviour causing the concern is not always clearly identified on the risk assessment.

The head of boarding and the boarding staff team have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the boarders' specific needs. Working closely with the school's well-being specialists, therapists and safeguarding officers, the boarding staff implement focused and well-thought-out, tailored strategies to support boarders' emotional health.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Senior leaders and managers are highly competent, experienced and confident in maintaining a positive culture. Their passion, dedication and aspiration are mirrored by the boarding staff who provide the boarders with experiences and individual support which helps them flourish.

Led by a highly experienced head of boarding and guided by knowledgeable and professional well-being and therapy senior leaders, the staff work cohesively and collaboratively in providing guidance for the boarders to recognise and achieve their full potential. All the staff share the common aim of providing an excellent boarding experience for the pupils to enhance their learning outcomes and make significant personal and social development to advance their future life chances.

Senior leaders and managers are committed to continuous improvement of the support they provide to meet the increasingly complex needs of the pupils. Recent developments have included strengthening the provision for pupils' well-being by increasing resources for counselling and ensuring that therapy is fully integrated into the pupils' education and boarding experiences.

The boarding staff undertake a wide range of training to meet the needs of boarders, with a sharp focus on safeguarding them and promoting their well-being. More comprehensive induction programmes for new staff have been introduced to promote best practice. Through annual staff appraisals, relevant training and regular supervision, the staff receive effective direction to improve their practice and their support for boarders.

Senior leaders and managers are systematic in their monitoring of the boarding provision, identifying areas for development to achieve positive outcomes for boarders. The governing body provides robust scrutiny, challenge and oversight. With knowledge and expertise, governors are actively involved in monitoring safeguarding systems and the boarding provision.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that risk assessments clearly identify the behaviour that is causing concern, and which requires specific protective strategies to be implemented by the staff.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC013927

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Jonathan Hetherington

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Inspector

Jan Hunnam, Ofsted Inspector

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